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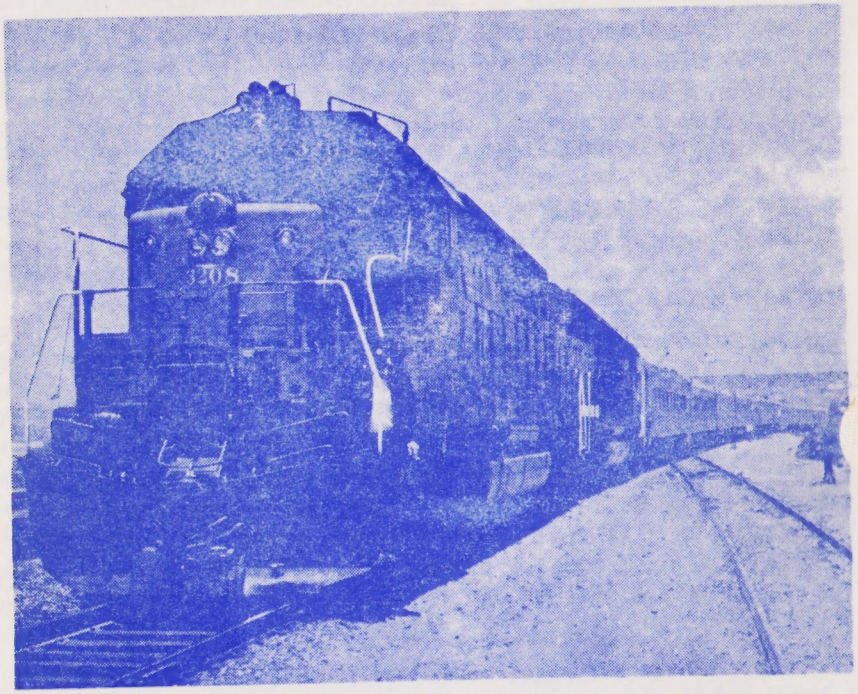


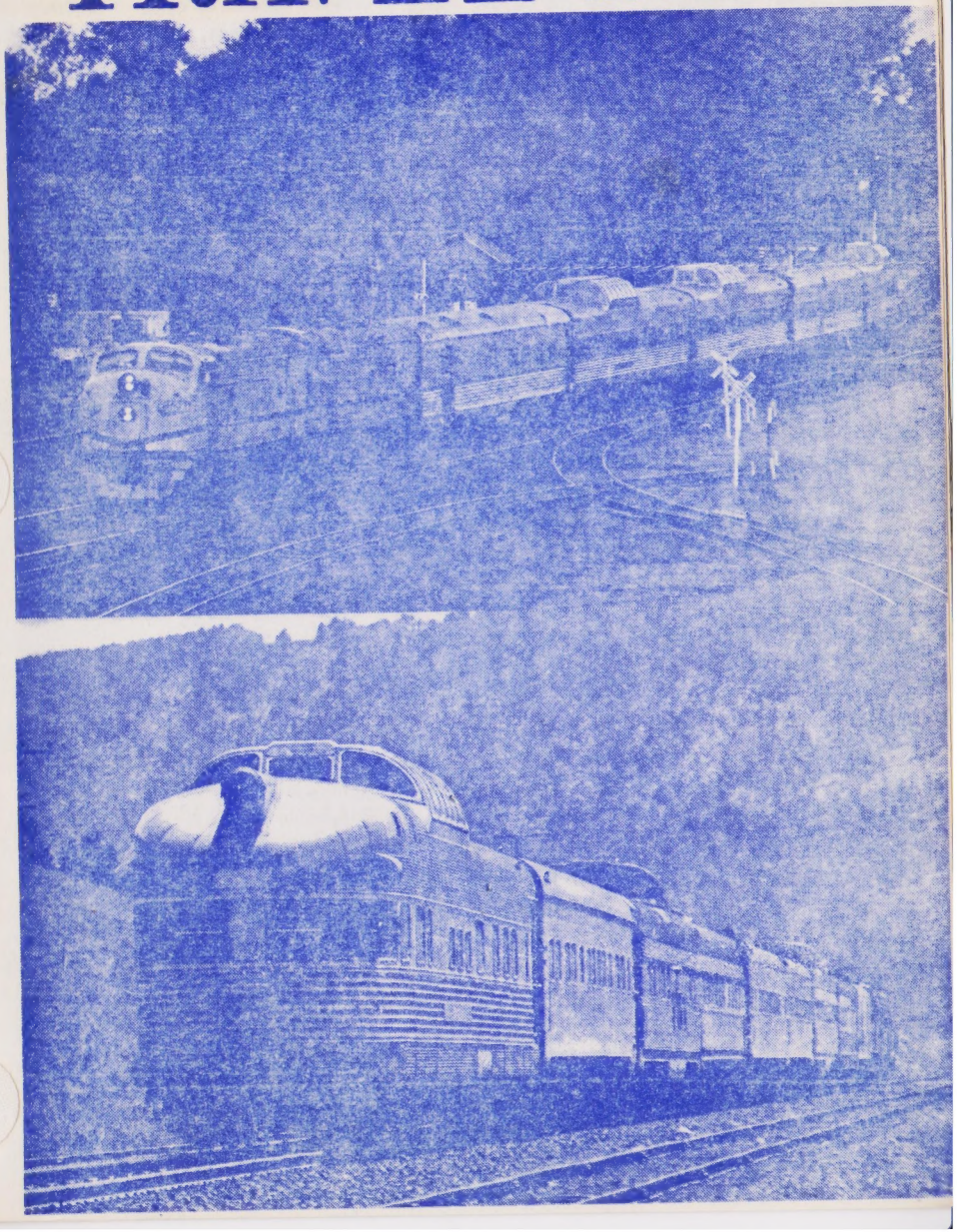
On Sunday, May 21, the Pacific Railroad Society operated a 22-car special excursion train from Los Angeles to Surf and return (see RTN, May 15). The consist included 17 coaches, 3 diners (one used as a snack car), and 2 lounge cars, all provided by Southern Pacific. At Surf, the majority of the 900 passengers transferred to buses for the short trip into Lompoc to visit the restored Spanish mission La Purisima Concepcion and to tour the famous Lompoc Valley flower fields. Soon after the last bus left for Lompoc, the nearly empty special train was operated approximately another 5 miles west where the entire train was wyed on a branch line that serves Vandenberg Air Force Base. In this scene (photo kindly supplied by Herbert Johnson, Treasurer of PRS) the special, with SP SDP45's 3208 and 3209 hauling, has been turned and is easing into the siding at Surf to await the returning passengers for a 4:30 pm departure for Los Angeles. Unfortunately, says Mr. Johnson, this type of operation may never be repeated, due to unreasonably high guarantees required by Amtrak.

25¢

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

VOL. 2, NO. 14
JULY 17, 1972

#40



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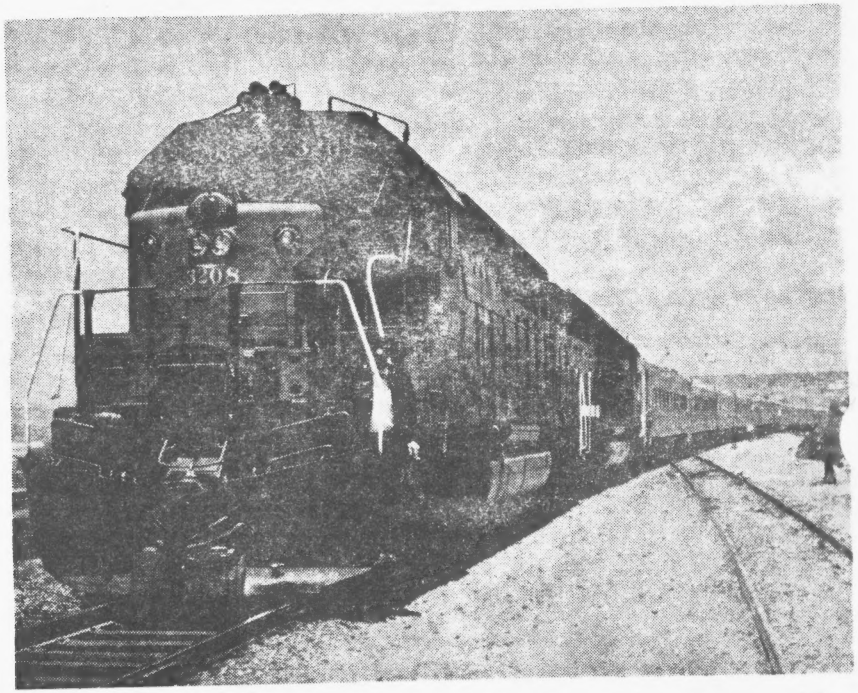

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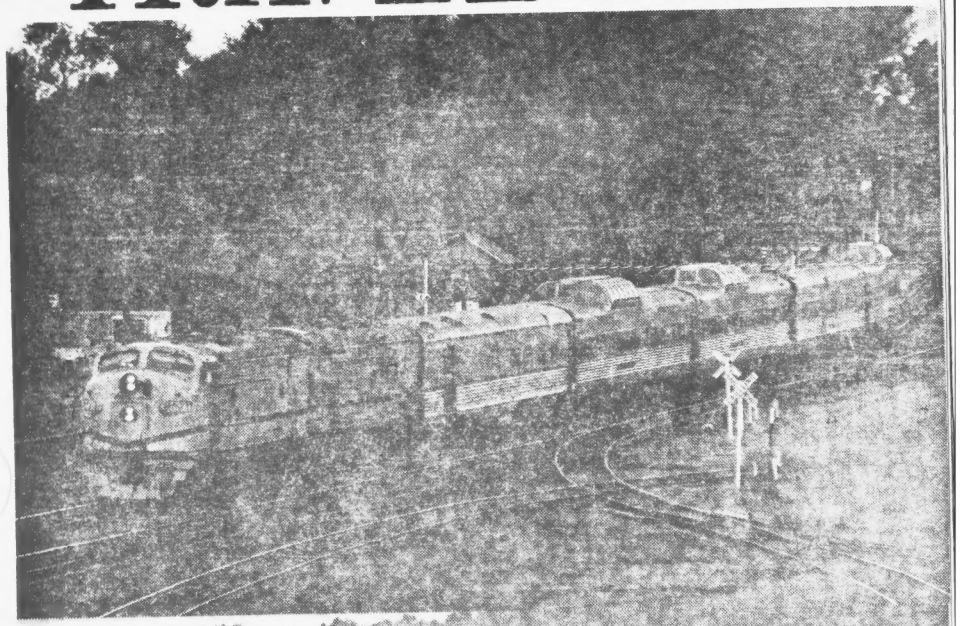

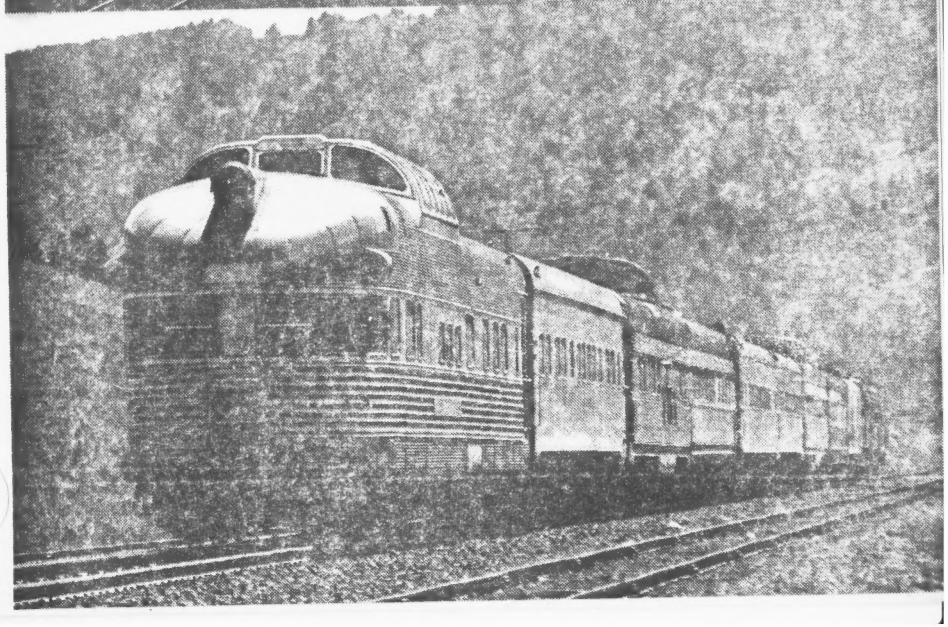

ON THE COVER:

DOMES FOR SUMMER TRAVEL--AMTRAK AND NON-AMTRAK. (top) Rio Grande's 5-car RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR leaves Provo, Utah, bound for Grand Junction and Denver on June 25. RTN published a brief report on this non-Amtrak train in the June 19 issue. (bottom) One of the most attractive passenger cars in Amtrak paint is the ex-CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR dome observation that brings up the rear of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA as the eastbound train heads downgrade for Livingston, Montana, after passing thru Bozeman Tunnel on June 22. See the June 5 issue of RTN for comments on this train. Both photos by Gilbert Hulin, Northwest Rail Images, Eugene, Oregon.

DEAR READER: If you are seeing RTN for the first time with this issue, let us explain that this is not a typical issue. Due to summer vacations, most of the contents of this issue were prepared well in advance, and consist primarily of feature articles, whereas usually the bulk of each issue is devoted to news items of timely interest. In the next issue, the August 7 issue, to be mailed about August 18, the usual format will be followed. Generally the news is fresh within one or two days before being mailed out by first class mail.

EDITORIAL

SUMMER VACATION - DRIVING MORE AND ENJOYING IT LESS by Jim Russell

As we predicted last time, this issue is late due to two weeks of summer vacation in the Sierra. We do lots of train riding throughout the year, but occasionally find it necessary to get away from civilization to some wilderness retreat where traffic, telephones and time schedules can be forgotten.

If a train existed for reaching the Sierra, we would have gladly taken it. But no longer does a train serve that vast California vacationland. So we begin our journey on the Interstate 80 speedway, with heavy traffic apparently reading the I-80 signs as speed limit indicators. We pull off into Truckee to view the station where the SP used to let off skiers and vacationers prior to Amtrak.

What's this? The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR is sitting immobile in the station! We watch a long time while workers fiddle around. The middle F unit has problems, and it is finally removed. The eastbound train gets underway again with 2 engines, leaving at the time it should be out of Reno. The train has no dome. At the very least, Amtrak should establish a flag stop here. Ideally, a well-promoted vacationers' and skiers' stop with bus connections (the Greyhound depot fills half the former station), promotional tie-ins with resorts and Stateline casinos, rental cars, maybe even auto carriers to drop off, ought to be here.

We have located a spot a half-mile from the nearest automobile, but with the comforts of home plus the glories of the Sierra. Our car now sits uselessly in the dust. After enduring the trip up here, we have earned our period of relaxation.

The return is worse. Two people died on our highway the day we came, but going back the traffic is hideous and harrowing, and at one point near Sacramento we just miss a collision ourselves from careless lane-changers. Cars and trailers are weaving all over the pavement in a strong cross-wind. One poor father with a new car is changing a tire on the freeway shoulder while others zip past a few inches away at 70mph (the wind makes 80mph impractical today). This is vacationing? This is fun? If war is hell, this is at least purgatory.

Back to Berkeley to glorious, air-conditioned weather. We begin to wonder why we left. Back to stacks of mail and a newsletter behind schedule--like the ZEPHYR in Truckee. We pick up a news item that sends our blood pressure up again. Secretary Volpe of the Dept. of Transportation is announcing that non-rail transportation deaths of all kinds increased in 1971, but it's O.K. since the death rate went down. That is, never mind that hundreds more of Americans met their deaths traveling last year, it's only that people are traveling more--or more correctly, traveling more in more dangerous conveyances. It's like 1984. The Ministry of Peace wages war and the Ministry of Love preaches Hate. What happens to people when they get behind a Washington desk? Do they take leave of all their senses?

But quickly, fortunately for us, an antidote to hypertension: Steve Farrar rushes us a note--look in the August issue of Harper's Magazine. Ah! There is a man writing sense for a change. The renowned environmentalist Lewis Mumford writes "In Praise of Trains" (see QUOTES, p. 10). This has to be one of the most important analyses of our transportation dilemma of the year, or of several years. Must reading for all who worry about our transportation system. Mumford understands our problems of getting around probably better than anybody else, and he is bold in proposing solutions. We will certainly be hearing more from him.

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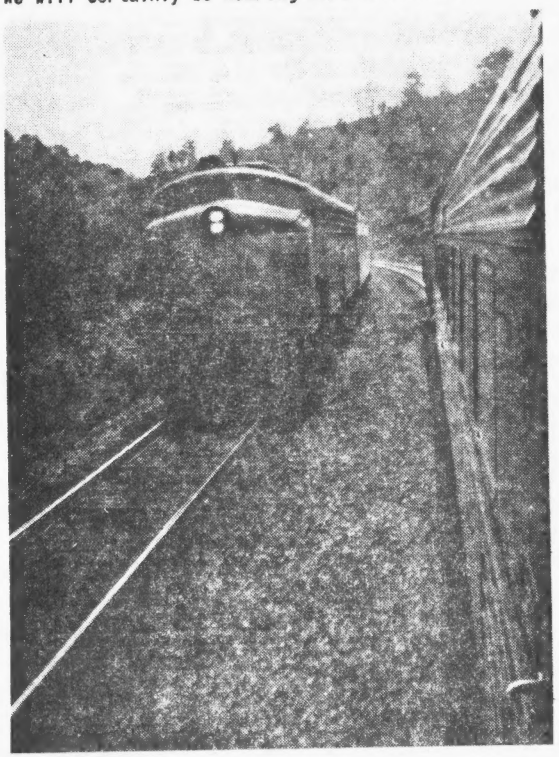
Projected mailing date for this issue: August 6.



A CORRECTION AND AN APOLOGY

The photo on the cover of the last issue was mislabeled, thru an error in film processing. It was not the POTOMAC SPECIAL that was shown, but the SILVER STAR/FLORIDIAN, northbd train 82 from Miami, pulling alongside its counterpart from St. Petersburg, Fla., at the junction in Auburndale, south of Orlando. The trains will run combined to Jacksonville before departing in separate directions. L&N engine 795 was pictured.

At the left is the photo we meant to print. Amtrak engine 200 is hauling the eastbound "Harley Staggers Special" as Paul Rayton aboard the westbound train photographs this meet. The date was June 3, the place the famous 17-mile grade.

We regret the error.

AMTRAK GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO NATIONWIDE RESERVATION SYSTEM

Amtrak on July 28 gave the go-ahead to contractors to begin installation of a $7 million advanced nationwide information and reservation system for intercity rail passengers. The system will provide confirmed round-trip reservations anywhere in the U.S. by a single toll-free phone call.

The system will have four regional reservation centers--Northeast, Southeast, Midwest (Chicago), and the West Coast. A central computer processing facility will be devoted to and controlled by Amtrak to service all reservation centers, and advanced communication facilities will provide toll-free public access to the centers and connect the centers to the central processing facility and to each other.

Control Data Corporation will provide the "nerve center," capable of responding to any reservation agent's questions within three seconds. Cytrol, Inc. of Minneapolis will program the system, and communications will be provided by the Bell System.

The system will operate 24 hours a day, and will have an initial capacity to handle over 400 trains per day, 18,000 new reservations per day, and 48 stops per train. Two million reservations can be on file simultaneously. Reservations will be stored by passenger name. One feature of the upcoming system is that it can provide instant information, such as fare changes, to agents without separate notification as at present.

Amtrak expects the system to be fully operating within two years; the Northeast area will begin next summer, the Southeast the latter part of 1973, and the West and Midwest by late 1974.

THE PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL GETS ROLLING

The first Seattle-Vancouver, B.C. Amtrak train ran as scheduled July 17. Amtrak has named the train the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. The pre-Amtrak BN train was called the INTERNATIONAL. Slight schedule changes were made over that shown in our last issue. End-point times of the southbound train (#197) are unchanged, but the northbound #194 reaches Vancouver at 10:05pm rather than the originally planned 9:45. The change is due primarily to a 15-min stop at White Rock, B.C., for Canadian customs inspection. One-way fare has been set at $6.50, with a 5-day round-trip excursion fare of $8.75, Amtrak announced July 14. One-way coach fare between Chicago and Vancouver is $96.50.

The first train carried four cars, all in Amtrak paint and all packed with passengers. Arrival at Vancouver was 45 minutes late. The consist was a snack-coach plus coaches. On later runs, a dome coach was also used. The train backs into the Vancouver CN station in order to avoid paying CN a hostling charge to turn the train.

HAROLD GRAHAM ANNOUNCES FORTHCOMING AMTRAK SCHEDULE CHANGES

In a talk in Miami in late July, Amtrak's Harold Graham indicated that the schedule of the FLORIDIAN will be changed in the next timetable. It will leave Miami at 10:45am and arrive Chicago at 7:30pm the next night. There will no longer be a layover at Jacksonville.

Two New York-Miami trains will be added for the winter season, and the FLORIDA SPECIAL will be all-Pullman.

There is no chance of re-routing the FLORIDIAN thru Atlanta before July 1, 1973, if then.

All NY-Miami trains are to carry refurbished equipment for next winter.

AMTRAK FIGHTS STATE LIQUOR LAWS

The states of Kansas and Oklahoma have decided to crack down on the serving of liquor on Amtrak trains. Amtrak claims that it operates under Federal law and need not observe the state laws regarding the serving of liquor. July 18 Kansas officials boarded the CHIEF in Newton and arrested crew members who were serving liquor. The same evening, Oklahoma agents boarded the TEXAS CHIEF northbound from Houston, confiscated liquor, and arrested a steward and a bartender. Amtrak indicated that it would go to court over the matter, but the following day temporarily halted liquor sales in "dry" states until a court decision can be made.

AMTRAK SIGNS ITS FIRST LABOR CONTRACT

July 24 Amtrak signed an agreement with the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks that covers Amtrak's ticket sellers, reservations personnel, and other nationwide clerical forces. Amtrak President Roger Lewis said he was satisfied with the settlement: "An initial contract usually is a tough one to negotiate because every clause is new and must be bargained. The fact that the parties were able to reach agreement without having to resort to the lengthy mediation procedures provided for in the Railway Labor Act is a tribute to the respective organizations."

RF&P SAYS NO TO COMMUTER SERVICE

Eastern rail supporters were stunned when the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad announced July 12 that it would be impossible to run commuter trains along with freight on its Northern Virginia lines. One commuter spokesman summed up the argument this way: "This attitude from the RF&P cannot be understood, since the commuter service would be subsidized with no loss to the railroad--in fact, it would be money in their pockets. Their tracks in the area to be used range from four on the north end, to three, then double to Quantico, the southernmost point on the proposed commuter run. These could definitely handle the added traffic."

The Washington Evening Star and Daily News editorialized against the railroad's position July 17th with a cartoon picturing a freight train crewman kicking a commuter off a caboose with the words "This is a freight line and we aim to keep it that way!"

LETTERS

Periodically Rail Travel Newsletter prints items detrimental to Amtrak. I am speculating about the motive involved. It is obvious that such statements are extremely gratifying to railroad executives, who with other interests including the Nixon Administration, would like to see Amtrak eliminated.

Having traveled exclusively by rail for over sixty years, I witnessed the downgrading of passenger trains, together with other schemes, by railroad executive management which were designed to drive passengers away from rail transport.

...Under the inconsistent and ridiculous formula permitted by the ICC, any passenger train could be shown to operate at a loss. The most exasperating fact is that no honest figures on the cost of operating a passenger train have ever been made public...

Burt C. Blanton

Dallas, Tex.

I have access to the BN Como shops. I noted last week that inside works include two ex-CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR observation cars (Silver Penthouse & Silver Horizon), just about ready to come out. Ex-SCL tavern-lounge car Amtrak #3345 is also finished. BN Great Dome Prairie View and ex-North Coast Ltd sleeper-lounge in the sky car #376 or Amtrak #9221 also is ready to come out. When I mean ready to come out of Como, I mean complete new paint job and interior work.

Other cars still to be worked on include ex-CZ Silver Club and Quail; ex-TWIN ZEPHYR Silver Vision, Scene, River, Dome, and Castle; ex-DENVER ZEPHYR Silver Chateau; ex-TWIN ZEPHYR Silver View and Vista.

The 4-day local train HIAWATHA has been running a 2-unit (Milwaukee Road E's) power, a baggage, 4 flattop coaches, an ex-BN dome coach, an ex-SCL diner, and either the ex-DZ parlor observation Silver Veranda or the ex-GN Cathedral Mountain.

The 3-day NORTH COAST HIAWATHA is quite a train lately. Sometimes as many cars as 15. Three Milwaukee E's into Minneapolis, a full baggage, a baggage-dorm, 5 or 6 flattop coaches (some ex-SP yellow types), a BN dome coach, a full ex-NORTH COAST LTD diner, 2 Amtrak sleepers, an ex-NCL sleeper-lounge-in-the-sky car, then the ex-CZ observation car. Sure looks funny to see two lounge cars on the same train.

The daily EMPIRE BUILDER looks much like the train of years past. Summer season has the Ranch car back on in addition to the full diner and Big Dome Lounge car. Regular consist is 3 BN E's, full baggage, baggage-dorm, 3 flattop coaches, BN dome coach, Ranch car, Big Dome-lounge, full diner, slumbercoach, then 3 or 4 either Amtrak or ex-UP sleepers.

John H. Goodman

Bloomington, Minn.

After reading your excellent article in the last issue of RTN which mentioned the disgraceful conditions on the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, I thought you might be interested in a letter I have written to Roger Lewis describing my experience on this train: "...Amtrak #51 to Cincinnati & Chicago is a miserable excuse for a train. The air-conditioning did not function properly in the diner and the only two waiters aboard were nearly driven to desperation as they valiantly endeavored to serve in excess of 70 passengers for dinner. They performed quite capably under the circumstances. However, no Amtrak employee should ever be forced to work under such intolerable circumstances.

"Sleeping car #5150 should have been bad-ordered. The car was extremely noisy, making sleep nearly impossible. Furthermore, there was such an overpowering odor of disinfectant permeating the entire car that I became nauseated before the evening was over. Several of the lights in my dingy roomette (#6) did not work and in the morning there was absolutely no water to be had.

"May I suggest that Amtrak 'passenger service representatives' be transferred from such untypical glamour routes as those of the METROLINERS and the SUPER CHIEF where service was superb before the word 'Amtrak' was ever thought of to the more realistic Amtrak trains, such as nos. 50-51?

"I would appreciate knowing what corrective action you plan on taking."

Christopher H. Anderson

Wilmington, Ohio

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Rails in Britain 1972

by George Drury

PART II - Concluded

The Pirates and the Pullman

Thursday morning we again started by bus, this time to Cholsey, where we caught a suburban train to Didcot, one station west. It took an hour, using the bus and the train, to cover a net distance of five miles; the taxi could have done it faster but more expensively. At Didcot we waited for the next train to Bristol. We didn't wait more than twenty minutes, but during the interval there were several trains through: a westbound express, two eastbound trains, a DMU or two, and a train to Oxford, which bypassed the station proper.

The ride to Bristol was a fast one, through more green fields. At Swindon we passed the Western Region's shops and saw several diesel-hydraulics in various stages of scrapping. Western Region has a reputation for individuality as did its predecessor company, the Great Western, which was originally built to seven-foot gauge. This tradition shows up currently in the extensive use of diesel-hydraulics (with names like Western Glory and Western Talisman). The diesel-hydraulics have not been outstandingly successful, though.

At Bristol we had lunch in the station restaurant and then continued our trip on a Liverpool-Plymouth-Penzance train. As the afternoon progressed the scenery became more interesting, much hillier, and the weather turned to rain. For several miles west of Exeter the track followed the coast - in fact, it was right on the seawall. Tourists (or holiday-makers) seemed to be the primary business in the towns of the Cornish Riviera, though dairying was evidenced by the number of milk tank cars standing in yards and sidings.

At Plymouth the rear half of the train was detached, including the buffet car, and the five or six coaches remaining continued west.

At Saltash the train crossed one of I. K. Brunel's bridges, a two-span structure, each span having a tubular arch at least fifteen feet in diameter with the roadway suspended from it. It was built in 1879. The line also crossed several high stone viaducts over valleys, towns, and rivers, and the scenery became ruggedly coastal.

The line ends at Penzance, a resort town at the southwest tip of England. The station has a short train shed, which was just long enough to hold a couple of coaches at the bumper end of the track and then, with a short space for safety, the diesel of our train. The rain wasn't heavy, but the wind was blowing hard. We checked our bags at the left luggage office and then headed up town for dinner. We got the impression the town either had closed for the day or hadn't opened for the season. Dinner in England usually is no earlier than 7:30, and we searched twenty minutes for a restaurant that was open at 6:00.

Food in England tends to be plain, and the visitor gets the impression that the Britons have higher things than food occupying their mind. We found an exception, though, in Penzance. We had a drink in the bar. In Britain you get a funny look when you ask for ice in a drink; however, you can ask for an aperitif, such as vermouth or Dubonnet and you'll get ice and no funny stare. Dinner was superb. The soup was made for just such a rainy, windy day. I had veal sauted with mushrooms and served with a sauce flavored with cinnamon, odd-sounding but delicious, and the usual nicely-done vegetables. For dessert I chose a mocha meringue shell filled with thick sweet cream and topped with chocolate sauce (if you're going to have calories, you might as well do it right).

After dinner we returned to the station and waited perhaps half an hour for the sleepers to be ready for occupancy, watching a train arrive and making the acquaintance of the well-fed station cat in the interim.

At 21:30 we boarded our sleeper. BR's Inter-City Service includes not only there-and-back-in-a-day services but also sleepers. Inter-City Sleepers run from London to almost every major city in the

north of England and in Scotland, to south Wales, and to Cornwall, plus the night ferry service to Brussels and Paris. Most of the services are arranged so that passengers can occupy the cars both before departure and after arrival. Many of the cars are set-outs: picked up or set off during the night at intermediate stations. The train we boarded had two Motorail cars on the rear (BR plays Auto-Train all over the country, and with great success), six or seven sleepers, and a coach, which Jim dubbed the Inter-Sleepy Sitter. Our tickets had neither car number or room assignment; the bulletin board in the station, though, had lists of the passengers assigned to each car, and we found our space in car E, rooms 6 and 7.

There are both first-class and second-class sleepers. I think they are identical except that firsts have one bed in a room and seconds have two, an upper and a lower. A corridor runs along one side of the car, and eleven rooms, plus an attendant's room, open from it. The rooms are similar to a U.S. crosswise bedroom, except that the beds are fixed in place - few runs are long enough to require both sitting and sleeping space, and BR assigns a coach for sleeper passengers to those trains. The rooms have many shelves, racks, and hooks, including a small drawer for little things, like change and a tie clip (or earrings) and a hook specially built to hold a watch. There is a ventilator with choice of warm or cool, steam heat, and a window that opens. Instead of a shade for the window, there is a panel that slides across, darkening the room completely. With typical attention to detail, though, it has a grill to let air through from the open window. In the corner is a washbasin; beneath it, where you'd expect a toilet to unfold, is a small door that opens to reveal a chamber pot, which automatically empties as you return it to its place.

The night passed quickly. I awoke once or twice, but the bed was the best I slept on during the two weeks. I looked out the window just as we rolled into Paddington at 5:45 and then went back to sleep, waking at 7:00 when the attendant knocked on the door and handed in a tray with tea and biscuits. It seemed a civilized way to start the day: tea in bed, as fortification for the tasks of dressing and shaving.

Jim said we'd have breakfast on the South Wales Pullman, so I walked to the outer end of Platform 8 to watch the morning rush: conventional trains, DMU's, and London Transport tube trains. Something was coming or going every two or three minutes. "Surfeit" is, I think, the right word.

There was some confusion as we boarded the Pullman: we took seats 10 Forward and 10 Backward in what we thought was car C, but the attendant was confused about whether it was indeed car C and took us one car to the rear, to a smoker. We kept insisting we didn't want to be in a smoker, so finally we returned to where we started, re-seated two men in seats 10 and sat us in their seats.

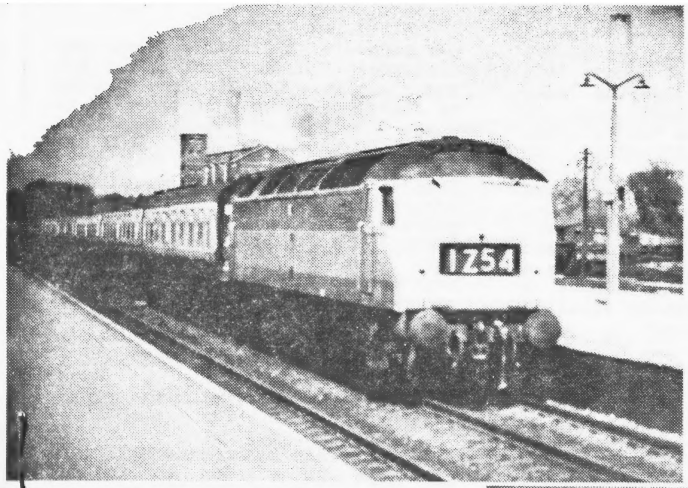
Pullman corresponds, roughly, to U.S. parlor car. Seating is two-and-one, like CN club car, except that pairs of seats face each other, with a table between. The seats do not swivel, but they do recline.

The train itself was a DMU with streamlined ends; the day we rode it had 8 cars.

Shortly out of Paddington the stewards began serving breakfast: grilled eggs, bacon, sausages, mushrooms, and potatoes, lots of toast, and coffee. The train made its first stop at Newport, an hour and fifty minutes and about 130 miles from Paddington. There was little feeling of speed as we rolled along, because of the good roadbed and the excellent equipment. The ride was, of course a quiet and dignified one.

We had originally planned to go to Swansea; Jim decided, though, that he'd have to return from Cardiff, in order to do some shopping. He offered me several options: return with him, continue to Swansea, or strike out on my own. I studied the Western Region timetable for a few minutes and mapped out a trip north to Shrewsbury, at least. (Each of BR's regions issues a paperback book of schedules. Except for Southern Region, which uses a 6 by 9 page, page size is 8-1/2 by 11, and the total stack is about 3 inches high. They don't include some of the London suburban services.)

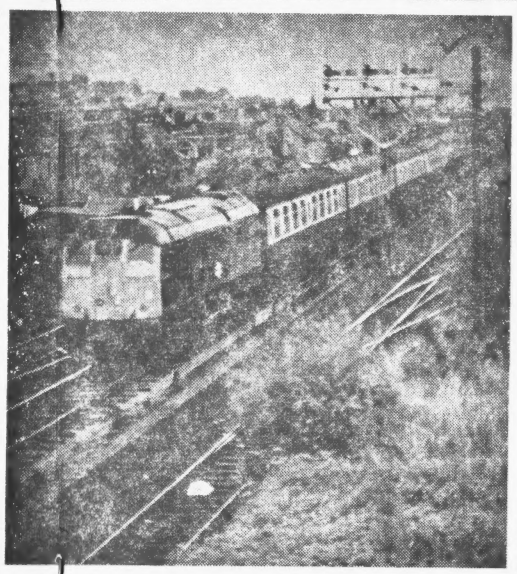
I boarded a DMU set in Cardiff, and a quick look at the timetable showed me I could go all the way to Crewe and be in Oxford at the same time as if I went only to Shrewsbury. The Herefordshire

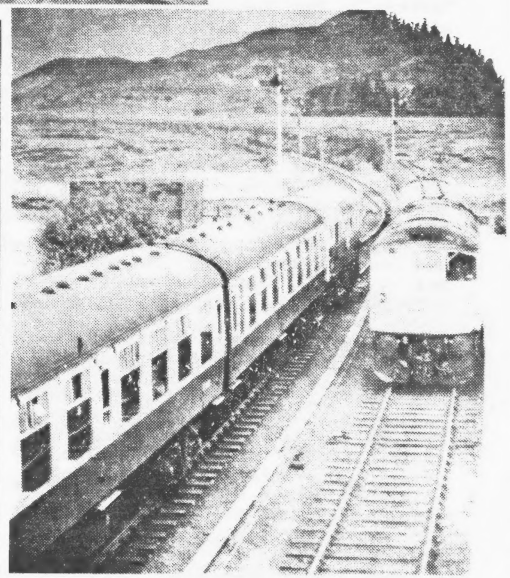


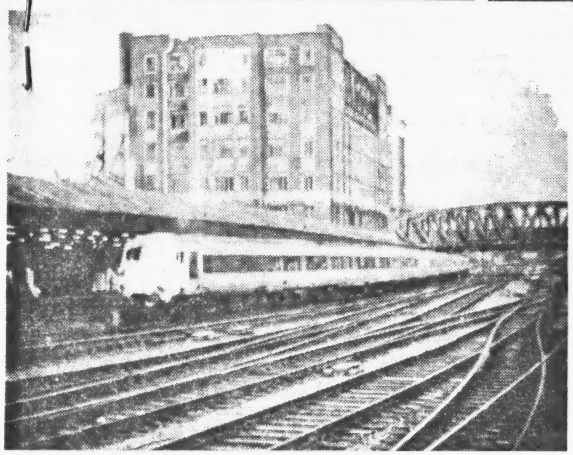
(left) Train arriving at Didcot, England, May 25.

(below, right) A meet with the "up" train at Achnasheen, Scotland, May 17.

All photos by the author.







(above, left) Thurso and Wick train arriving at Inverness, Scotland, May 18.

(left) South Wales Pullman at London's famous Paddington Station, May 26.

The first part of George Drury's article appeared in the June 19 issue of RTN.

scenery was wet, green, and hilly, and the cars were full, since this was the start of spring Bank Holiday. At noon I went back to the buffet (pronounced "buffy") for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. BR Catering always seemed to have plenty of cups, but there was, more often than not, a dearth of lids. However, I made it back to my seat, through several stiff sliding doors and over mounds of luggage in the second-class cars and across a couple of buffers, without spilling any coffee.

At Crewe I had fifteen minutes or so to go upstairs and cross over to Platform 4 for the next train to Birmingham. While I waited two trains to London departed, one of them a "relief train" (we call them "extras") for the holiday weekend. The platform was full of people, and the train was, too. I found a first-class non-smoking compartment with no trouble, and was joined in a moment by a woman and her three young sons. We sat for fifteen minutes or so in the traditional first-class-compartment silence, and then the boys, who had explored the compartment and the corridor, started talking. One of them told in great detail about a dog that had been run over on the street, and I said "That's certainly not very pleasant."

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At Birmingham there was some delay, and the train left for Oxford about 10 minutes late, using about half the time I had allotted to the walk from the BR station to the bus station in Oxford. Along the way we were further delayed by a signal or two, At Oxford there was a wait in the yard while a local train cleared the station. I hit the platform running, since it would be a two-hour wait for the next bus if I missed the 7:00 one. I got to the bus station about 7:10 and, thanks to the bank holiday, found the bus still waiting, full of passengers and more waiting to board. It was another 15 minutes before a relief bus arrived. The trip to Dorchester was uneventful.

The Birmingham-Oxford ride was my last BR trip. I did have another session of train watching Sunday evening in Reading, though, before dinner. I discovered that BR can uncouple an engine from one end of a train and add another engine to the other end in four minutes. (How long does it take at Cheyenne and Denver?)

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LAST RIDE ON THE POCAHONTAS LINE

by Steve Farrar

On Saturday, May 1, 1971, about half of the nation's passenger trains made their last runs, many unnoticed by the public. The last Penn Central train from Cleveland to Chicago left that Saturday afternoon with only eight people aboard, with its usual grimy diesel and cars, and without fanfare.

But the Norfolk & Western's POCAHONTAS went out in style, with a farewell celebration that would have done justice to the TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED or the QUEEN MARY.

N&W rented the Nickel Plate Road steam engine No. 759 from the High Iron Co. of Lebanon, N.J. On the 759's tender the railway painted over the Nickel Plate name, substituting "Norfolk and Western." Also, the melodious whistle from N&W streamlined steam loco No. 611 was installed on the 759. No. 611, now in Wasena Park in Roanoke, hauled the POCAHONTAS until the diesels came in 1958.

To commemorate the last run, N&W published a fancy booklet giving the history of its passenger service beginning well before the Civil War with the old City Point Railroad between Petersburg and what is now Hopewell. The booklet noted that, ironically, the POCAHONTAS, N&W's first name train (1923), was also its last.

Many N&W name trains have come and gone while the POCAHONTAS carried on. There was the night CAVALIER between Norfolk and Cincinnati, the CANNONBALL between Richmond and Norfolk, the postwar POWHATAN ARROW between Norfolk and Cincinnati and the TENNESSEAN between Washington and Memphis--all now buried under multiplying lanes of asphalt.

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The diesels were removed and much switching done. Instead of the normal two coaches, dome coach and diner, the farewell train had two baggage cars--one full of steam engine repair parts and one with a food-and-souvenirs concession run by the Roanoke Chapter, National Railway Historical Society--, three dome coaches, eleven coaches, diner, private-room sleeper for VIP's, and the old Wabash parlor-observation "Lafayette."

About noon, No. 759 eased the POCAHONTAS out of Roanoke for the last time ever. Hundreds of citizens lined the right-of-way east of the station to wave a sometimes smiling, sometimes tearful goodbye. The Virginia Folk Singers played "Last Ride on the Pocahontas Line" from the observation platform, helping No. 4 tell its public farewell.

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Lynchburg. A fair crowd was on hand, but it wasn't representative of the size of the city. Smaller places such as Farmville and Crewe were to produce much larger crowds later in the day. Since the closing of the old Lynchburg Union Station downtown, N&W trains have used a new station on a dead-end street out in the boondocks--out of sight, out of mind.

As the POCAHONTAS progressed eastward we noticed that never once did it go into a siding for a freight. In every case, the freight took the siding. Even where there was double track, the freights stood still as old No. 4 went by. Sure, this was probably a safety precaution because of the people waiting at trackside, but we like to think that the freights were pausing to pay last respects to their "flagship."

The stop at Appomattox was typical of what was to happen at each rural station. It took five or ten minutes just to let off and take on those taking one last ride, or maybe a first and last ride.

The last run evoked mixed emotions for us. It was a happy day. The sun was shining; it was a beautiful Virginia spring day. It was good to know that the railroad thought enough of the train to have a grand finale with a steam locomotive. It was good to see a big crowd on a passenger train.

But it was also an unspeakably sad day. Rail passenger service for cities as large as Roanoke and Norfolk was ending. It seemed like this couldn't happen so soon, but it was happening. Many people, especially students and the elderly, would have to find a new way to travel. For example, Longwood College girls would no longer be able to go direct to Petersburg and Norfolk, as all buses run via Richmond.

As we waved goodbye to Pamplin City from the observation platform, we noticed a very old lady gazing at the train, tears streaming down her cheeks. Something had brought back too many memories...

At Crewe, the fire department filled the two tenders with water. When the POCAHONTAS left Crewe it was nearing 5pm, normal time for arrival in Norfolk.

While No. 4 paused on the long curve at Blackstone, we went to the dining car for supper. As we entered the carpeted car and sat down at the table with the snowy-white linen, the realization came: "Hey, this is your last N&W meal!" There had been many good ones, not only on the POCAHONTAS, but also on the old POWHATAN ARROW and the long-gone PELICAN on the Bristol line. The waiter was not exactly caught up in the spirit of the last run, as he had been serving all day and had had no lunch himself. But the food was as fine as ever.

Just east of Petersburg, the POCAHONTAS hit the fifty-mile stretch of straight track through the peanut country, and soon she was running like there was no tomorrow. And, of course, there wasn't. Fifty, then sixty, sixty-five, ultimately seventy miles an hour. After being shocked at seeing a 19-car steam train at seventy, the lineside onlookers (many too young to have seen a steam engine before) barely recovered enough to wave at the folks on the back platform as the train disappeared to the east. The POCAHONTAS was singing her swan song, no doubt about it.

No. 4 paused at two flagstops, Waverly and Wakefield, which too often in the past had not required a stop because no one wanted to get on or off. The folk singers, almost exhausted from a whole day of singing and guitar-strumming, bid Waverly goodbye with another round of "Last Ride on the Pocahontas Line."

At Suffolk, a huge load boarded for the last ride to Norfolk. They had waited almost four hours, as the train was that late because of the crowds. As darkness fell, No. 759 chuffed off through the Dismal Swamp toward Norfolk.

At Norfolk, about 1000 people had driven down to see the last train in, creating a traffic jam that was to last almost an hour. The jam-up and the exhaust fumes seemed to symbolize the automobile age. The POCAHONTAS belonged to a more gracious era.

At 9:10pm, Saturday, May 1, 1971, on windswept Lambert's Point, Norfolk & Western's POCAHONTAS ground to a halt and joined her Indian namesake in history.

CUMBRES AND TOLTEC SCENIC RAILROAD
by Richard Tower

If Amtrak is looking for a successful formula, they might try operating a train that goes from nowhere to nowhere, charges 21¢ per passenger mile, uses converted 70-year-old boxcars to carry its passengers, and is pulled by a black, grimy steam locomotive. That's the formula Scenic Tours, Inc., is counting on to make a success of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, the best steam excursion line I've ever ridden.

The three-foot gauge line, running 64 miles from Antonito in southeastern Colorado to Chama in north central New Mexico, was once part of the Denver and Rio Grande Western's Alamosa-Durango narrow gauge route. After its abandonment in 1968, the states of Colorado and New Mexico came up with over half a million dollars to purchase the most spectacular portion, and awarded an operating lease last year to Scenic Tours of California.

The train runs Saturday through Tuesday, traveling one way each day (a 6-hour ride). Passengers may return by a free railroad-operated bus if they wish, or spend the night and come back the next day by train. The line traverses the 10,015-foot Cumbres pass and runs through the deep Toltec gorge. Steam fans will find the 14 miles of 4% grade from Chama to Cumbres especially inspiring for the spectacular sonic and visual effects as the little 480-class Mikado works the hill with its tonnage limit behind the drawbar. Best of all, the whole operation has an authentic air. None of this guilded paint, fake smokestack, staged holdups business; just real steam mountain railroading. The fare is $13.50, and advance reservations are advised. Write the line in care of Chama, New Mexico.

SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR
by Richard Tower

Mixed reviews, ranging from lukewarm to high praise, have been coming in this summer on one of Amtrak's banner trains, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Lack of good equipment is definitely a problem despite earlier promises of a completely refurbished train by June. The standard consist west of Denver is nine cars, including a baggage-dorm, four coaches, one or two of which are refurbished, a lounge, either flattop or dome, an ex-California Zephyr diner, an all-bedroom sleeper, and a

roomette-bedroom sleeper.

The refurbished coaches are all ex-Santa Fe cars, and seem to suffer from the same occasional lapses of plumbing and air conditioning as their non-refurbished brothers. The lounges run clear through to Chicago rather than being switched out in Denver as was the original plan this summer. Besides the SP dome lounges not currently in the Omaha Autoliner shops for refurbishing, SP and UP flattop lounges are included in the rotation. The UP cars in particular are comfortable and attractive, but the occasional lack of a dome is a handicap for the train. Two refurbished SP domes are now in service, with another to enter soon. They feature wood paneling, red carpets, and two-tone red upholstery. Although leased from SP, they feature the exterior Amtrak color scheme.

East of Denver the consist increases to 14 cars with the addition of a roomette-bedroom sleeper, a slumbercoach, a dome coach, a flattop coach, and a coach snack car, which has replaced the familiar and more attractive dome-chuck wagon buffet.

Staffing of the train is shared by the BN, UP, and SP. The UP dining car crews in particular have built a reputation for polite and consistent service. However, as in pre-Amtrak days, courtesy seems to be a result of natural disposition rather than charm school, and an occasional rude employee still exists in this rather unsupervised atmosphere. Food on the new Amtrak menu is good and the steak dinner wins special praise.

By and large, though, few changes have resulted after 15 months of Amtrak. None of the hinted-at service improvements such as movies, music or child care have appeared to halp whittle away the long hours crossing Wyoming or Iowa. The lounges are not even consistently stocked with magazines as they should be, nor are board games and toys available for children as they are on Canadian National. To make the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR truly attractive, there will have to be more than equipment refurbishing and menu changes. Strict attention must be paid to crew standards and above all to the service amenities that will make the train fun and pleasureable to the modern traveler.

Paul Rayton photographed the SF ZEPHYR (then the CITY OF SF) eastbound in eastern Colorado last May 28.

Express Ads

FOR SALE - Much railroadiana including public timetables, dining car menus, employee timetables, railroad maps, etc. Send 50¢ for large list. Tom Coval, 21 East Robin Road, Holland, PA 18966.

3 RAIL FAN FUN-TRAINS--July 7-27 GLAMOROUS WEST--Sept. 1-18 FAR EAST CANADA--Jan. 13-28 MEXICO including Yucatan & Cozumel (Locomotive ride too). Write MIDWEST TRAVEL SERVICE, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City, OK 73110.

PHILADELPHIA AREA AND SOUTH JERSEY: "Seashore train service--use it or lose it." Take the train to the shore--help reduce air pollution, avoid traffic congestion and parking problems; it's also safer, and usually more comfortable (air-conditioned train) and more sociable. Trains leave Lindenwold (NJ) terminal, PATCO Hi-Speed Line, each Saturday and Sunday until Labor Day, 10am, for Ocean City, Wildwood, and Cape May. For further information, call Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Lines (609/963-2300) or write DELTRAN (DELaware Valley Citizens Committee for Better TRANsportation), PO Box 429, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010. DELTRAN--Membership, $2 a year; nonmember subscription to DELTRAN Newsletter, $1 a year.

RAILROAD CALENDAR. Thirteen handsome enlargements of postage stamps of the world depicting steam and diesel locomotives. Printed on stock suitable for framing. $2.50 postpaid. California residents add 5%. No C.O.D.'s. ACTION PRINTING, 24218 Hawthorne, Torrance, California 90505.

The train way may be faster--and nicer! I've put out comparative bus & rail EXURBAN skeds LONG BEACH & Indio, San Berdoo, Oxnard thru SLO, 25¢ SASE to R.J.Swan, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801. Now rail svc to this part of the LA-LB Metropolitan Statistical Area, using AMTRAK/AMPAC/RTD!

THE SOUTHERN RAILFAN--newsletter on current southeastern railroading for railfans. Passenger train news in detail every issue. 1 year (10 issue) subscription $3. Free sample. Walt Stringer, 132 Edgewood, Ardmore PA 19003.

Railroad uniform buttons for sale. The following are available: New York, New Haven and Hartford, Bangor and Aroostook and Central Vermont. J.F. Lajoie, 22 Stevens St., Methuen, Mass. 01844.

RAILROAD PRINTS. Twelve 8½" x 11" enlargements of postage stamps depicting steam and diesel locomotives. Printed on vellum bristol make beautiful collection framed. All twelve prints for $5.00 postpaid. California residents add 5%. No C.O.D.'s. ACTION PRINTING, 24218 Hawthorne, Torrance, California 90505.

SPECIAL! For sale: Hi-quality passenger train headrests, forms, envelopes, signs. Also buy menus, all roads, info on Akron Union, Cleveland Union, anything Amtrak. Send name to J. Tesner, 497 Park, Campbell, OH 44405.